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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE

RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 001204

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL RP

SUBJECT: NPA ADMITS TO KILLING ITS OWN

REF: MANILA 563: BRUTAL MURDER INVESTIGATED AS
EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, Reasons 1.4 (a) & (b)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In what may signal an internal power struggle within its ranks, or a message intended for those they believe are cooperating with Philippine authorities, the New People's Army (NPA) recently admitted responsibility for killing one of their veteran officials and the sister of an NPA commander. The NPA admitted May 23 to killing Evelyn Pitao-Dadula, the sister of local NPA commander Leoncio Pitao, accusing her of being a long-time intelligence agent for the Philippine military. In early March, the NPA assassinated Eleizer Billanes, a veteran official of several organizations affiliated with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), claiming he had embezzled CPP funds. The NPA had originally accused the Philippine military of carrying out both killings, but has now publicly acknowledged its role in Pitao-Dadula's and Billanes's murders. While NPA fratricide is not unknown, it is unusual for the NPA to publicly acknowledge its complicity in the killing of its own officials. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) The New People's Army (NPA) on May 26 admitted responsibility for the murder of Evelyn Pitao-Dadula, the sister of the Davao del Norte Province NPA commander, Leoncio Pitao. A statement on the NPA website outlined that Pitao-Dadula was killed for "political crimes against the people and the revolutionary movement." According to the website, the decision to execute Pitao-Dadula was made and upheld by the "People's Court of the Communist Party of the Philippines." Pitao-Dadula was accused by the NPA of being a long-time intelligence agent for the Philippine military and was killed May 23 in Davao Del Norte Province for her "blood debts." According to the NPA, these alleged crimes included providing the Philippine military with information that led to the arrest of one of her brothers in 1999, the murder of another brother in 2008, and the early 2009 murder of her former husband -- all of whom were NPA members. In carrying out Pitao-Dadula's assassination, the NPA also killed her current husband. The NPA later apologized for his death, admitting that his murder was "not in accordance with international humanitarian law."

¶3. (C) The assassination of Pitao-Dadula was the second killing to befall the Pitao family this year. In early March, Rebelyn Pitao, the 20 year-old daughter of Leoncio Pitao and the niece of Evelyn Pitao-Dadula, was found murdered in Davao del Norte Province after she was reportedly abducted, tortured, and raped by armed men. Her father, a long-time NPA commander in the province, accused the Philippine military and the Arroyo administration of her murder. In a private meeting with the Ambassador, Secretary of National Defense Gilberto Teodoro and then Philippine Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Alexander Yano expressed revulsion at the murder and affirmed their commitment to

conduct a thorough investigation into the crime (reftel). No arrests have yet been made in the case. The Davao City police and the Commission on Human Rights in Davao have attempted to investigate the incident, but have told Embassy officials that they have had little cooperation from local Philippine military officials while pursuing this investigation.

14. (C) In early March, the NPA publicly admitted responsibility for killing veteran official Eleizer Billanes, accusing him of embezzling funds from several organizations affiliated with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

The NPA claimed that Billanes was a Philippine "military asset." In the immediate wake of Billanes's assassination, the NPA vigorously accused the Philippine government of "masterminding" his death. Their accusations were so successful that many human rights groups likewise blamed the Philippine government for orchestrating the murder. It was only after the NPA publicly admitted their role in Billanes's killing that human rights organizations ceased to accuse the police and military of complicity in the crime. Informed sources later confirmed that the NPA had carefully choreographed the planning of both the assassination and the subsequent propaganda campaign accusing the military of his murder.

15. (C) COMMENT: The NPA has waged a four-decade-long war against a succession of Philippine administrations. Starting out as a guerrilla movement based on communist principles, the NPA has gradually degenerated into acts such as extortion and kidnappings-for-hire with criminal rather than ideological motives. The NPA's recent admission of killing

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its own members likely indicates either an internal power struggle, or an attempt to purge members it perceives as having cooperated with Philippine authorities. Additionally, the NPA's confirmation of their role in the murders of two well-known members in Davao del Norte Province has led many to speculate that the murder of Rebelyn Pitao may have been sanctioned by the NPA as well.

KENNEY